

Simple Steps to Building a Young Adult Advisory Board

Young adult advisory boards are informal groups of teen patrons that advise the librarians on the young adult services at the library and how to develop and improve those services. Teen advisory board meetings serve as excellent means of communication, terrific sources of new and innovative ideas, and are the best way for you to keep in touch with what teens want and expect from the library!

1. Talk to teens at the library, at schools, and anywhere else you can. Encourage other library staff to promote the library to teens, too.
2. Ask permission to visit local schools. Booktalk to classes and promote your young adult services. Even if you can visit only one class, it's a start.
3. Ask youth to fill out a young adult survey (sample follows).
4. Use the list of names and addresses from the interest survey to develop a mailing list from which you invite youth to a young adult advisory board meeting.
5. Set a meeting date and place. Take in consideration regularly scheduled school and community events that will conflict with your meetings.
6. Post flyers and send news releases to the media about your meeting. Make sure you advertise that there will be food at the meeting!
7. Keep your monthly meetings consistent; meet in the same place at the same time and on a regular schedule.
8. Your first meeting should include an icebreaker or trivia game to relax everyone and help them get to know one another. Also, prepare a list of activities in which the group might want to participate during future meetings. Here are some suggestions:
 - Book discussion
 - Writing book reviews
 - Collection development ideas
 - Developing and conducting teen programs
 - Promoting the library and library programs
 - Learning and using storytelling skills
 - Improving school-public library cooperation
 - Building a webpage or teen site
 - Volunteer work at the library
 - Fundraising
 - Publishing a teen newsletter
 - Creating displays and decorations

9. Allow the teens to guide the direction the group will take. The librarian serves more as an advisor and organizer. The tricky part is to keep the meetings relaxed enough that they will enjoy themselves, but structured enough so it doesn't get out of hand.
10. After a few months, include a statement in a meeting announcement to all mailing list recipients:
"If you have not attended a young adult meeting this year, your name will be removed from this mailing list, unless you let me know that you want to continue to receive meeting notices."
Following the next meeting, purge your mailing list.

Remember...

When given the opportunity and the assurance that what they say will be listened to, teens will come up with innovative and wonderful ideas! Even if you don't have a formal teen advisory board or regular meetings, you still need to talk with the teens using your library for ideas and to help you determine what you do well and what needs improvement!

